

5

09/932,705 Byers 42-4

Remarks

Entry of the above-noted amendments, reconsideration of the application, and allowance of all claims pending are respectfully requested. By this amendment, new claims 15-21 are presented and the previously pending claims canceled. These amendments to the claims constitute a bona fide attempt by applicants to advance prosecution of the application and obtain allowance of certain claims, and are in no way meant to acquiesce to the substance of the rejections. Claims 15-21 are pending.

Rejection of Previously Pending Claims:

Claims 1, 3, 5, 8, 10 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 as being anticipated by Durant (U.S. Patent 6,016,212). The remaining claims were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being obvious based on Durant in view of Scifres (U.S. Patent 6,414,774) or Zouganeli (U.S. Patent 6,735,393). Applicants respectfully submit that the applied references, with or without modification or combination, assuming, *arguendo*, that the modification or combination of the applied references is proper, does not teach or suggest one or more elements of the invention as defined by the now pending claims, as further discussed below.

Claim 1 is directed to the method for optically interconnecting a plurality of processing units by wavelength division multiplexing. Messages are optically encoded among processing units using a shared free space optical beam line with multiple individual sub-channels each having a different wavelength. The beam line is contained entirely within a conduit connecting first and second hubs. Transmit probes within the conduit transmit messages among the respective processing units using a sub-channel of the shared beam line. A portion of the beam line is received by respective receive probes within the conduit where the receive probes are disposed in a helical arrangement along the beam line within the conduit. Message transmissions are recovered at the hubs by receivers associated with the processing units, where the message transmissions are carried by the different wavelengths of the beam line.

6

09/932,705 Byers 42-4

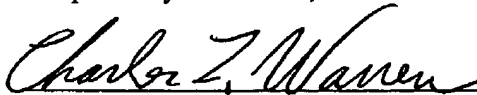
It is believed that none of the applied references, considered individually or in combination, suggest such a method. For example, the use of a conduit to enclose the free space beam line and the use of helically arranged receive probes within the conduit are not disclosed. Therefore, it is believed that claim 1 is directed to allowable subject matter.

Dependent claims 16-19 recite additional limitations, which considered in combination with the limitations in the parent claim (s), further patentably distinguish over the prior art.

Independent apparatus claims 20 is believed to be allowable for similar reasons as discussed above.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, allowance of all claims pending is respectfully requested. If a telephone conference would be of assistance in advancing the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to call applicants' attorney at the below telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,



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Dated: November 5, 2004

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